

News from the

**U.S. Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman



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Contact: Craig Orfield 202.224.6770

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***ENZI SAYS GLOBAL COMPETITION REQUIRES EDUCATION,
TRAINING FOCUS TO FILL PIPELINE WITH SKILLED WORKERS***

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today emphasized the need to strengthen and focus America’s education and training systems to ensure students have the knowledge to stay competitive in today’s global economy, and supply the nation with the mathematicians, scientists, engineers, and researchers it needs.

During a Roundtable held today, featuring participants from the business and education communities, Enzi said: “To be competitive in a global economy we must ensure that everyone has an opportunity to achieve academically and obtain the critical skills they will need to succeed, regardless of their background. To stay in the competitiveness race and win it, we must ensure that school is never out and learning never ends.”

“Unless more students complete high school on time and prepared for postsecondary education or the workforce, we will not have enough people in the pipeline to meet the projected 4.5 million skilled worker shortage by 2010,” Enzi added. “Without an educated workforce we are certain to lose our preeminence in the world to developing nations that are quickly growing, educating their citizens, and innovating at a much faster rate than we are.”

As an example of that challenge, American 15 year-olds ranked 24th out of the 29 developed nations in mathematics, literacy and problem-solving on the most recent program for the international student assessment.

Meanwhile, the number of American students who have graduated from college each year with degrees in engineering also has lagged far behind foreign nations. In 2004, China graduated about 500,000 engineers, while India graduated 200,000 and the United States graduated 70,000. In less than five years, China has more than doubled the number of their students who have graduated from college each year with degrees in engineering.

According to Enzi, statistics for minority students and the prospects for their future participation in a global economy add even greater cause for concern. Nationally, about one-third of all high school students do not graduate in four years. For minority students, this figure hovers around 50 percent.

Today's Roundtable is the second in a series of HELP Committee hearings based on the American Competitiveness Initiative outlined by President Bush during his State of the Union address delivered January 31. As part of the Competitiveness Initiative, the President's budget proposes almost \$400 million to strengthen schools and improve elementary and secondary instruction in math and science.

"The President's proposal reinforces my optimism that the spirit of American ingenuity can be applied to the common goal of improving schools and providing our children with a world class education – even though our financial resources are no longer unlimited."

Enzi pledged to lead the HELP Committee this year to move forward legislation directed at retaining America's competitive edge in the global economy by ensuring that higher education prepares today's students for the demands of tomorrow's workplace.

Under his leadership last year, the HELP Committee laid a foundation to boost competitiveness of American workers with passage of "The Higher Education Amendments Act of 2005" (HEA), the "Workforce Investment Act" (WIA), and "The Deficit Reduction Act," a bill that includes provisions to give low-income college students eligibility for billions of dollars in new federal grants if they pursue degrees in math, science or critical foreign languages.

Working in conjunction with HEA and WIA, the "Carl D. Perkins Act," which awaits conference committee action, will require state agencies to work together on identifying the needs of the workforce and in designing education and skills training programs to match those needs.

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